

KIOSK APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR POINT OF PREVIEW AND FOR COMPILATION OF MARKET DATA

This is a continuation of co-pending application Ser. No. 07/582,253, now abandoned, filed on Sep. 13, 1990.

TECHNICAL FIELD

This invention relates generally to the use of CD-ROM stored audio and video data and to point of sale preview apparatus, and more particularly this invention relates to a kiosk for the playback of selected data fragments in response to a user authorization signal and to a user selection signal.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a system for user-interactive multimedia based point-of-preview at a remote location, particularly for use in the music industry.

The 1980s witnessed a tremendous rise in consumer demand for home entertainment products particularly for the compact disc player. Wide consumer acceptance has been the result of more affordable ownership costs, superior sonics (compared with LPs and cassettes) and remarkable ease-of-use. In the United States alone, total sales of CD players skyrocketed from 1.2 million units in 1985 to over 17 million units in 1989 (over three times the growth rate of VCRs). CD players now represent one third of all new audio component sales with projections pointing to total U.S. sales topping 30 million players in the U.S. by 1991—making the CD player the fastest growing consumer electronics product in the last twenty-five years.

Despite the explosion of CD player sales, most consumers own very few CDs (studies indicate the average CD player owner possess only nine discs). When it comes to purchasing a specific compact disc, the consumer is faced with several constraints and dilemmas. Compact discs are roughly twice the retail price (\$14-\$16) of LPs and cassettes and as a result, the consumer is more reluctant to explore new and/or unproven artists for fear of wasting money. Moreover, there is the issue of "selection stress", a common problem for the average music buyer who is confronted with an enormous catalogue from which to choose and few mechanisms to assist him or her in evaluating these choices. The typical retail music store has developed the "superstore" format in which to promote its products, yet salespeople generally have not kept pace with the sophistication of the market. Hence, consumers are at a clear disadvantage. They cannot sample or interact with the product while in the music store and they cannot return products they do not like. Although many consumers wish to build larger collections, buying decisions are often risky and mistakes are costly.

At the artist level, the proliferation of new music markets, styles and tastes has caused the number of record labels to increase dramatically. The record industry has expanded from several major labels in 1970 to more than 2,500 distributed and independent labels today. Each year more than 2,500 new artists are introduced into an already crowded market.

Currently, label executives have no way to test market their respective acts or albums before dollars are committed to the production, promotion and distribution process. Further there is no current methodology to build consumer awareness of the act, or to increase

the act's base outside of radio and television or concert tours. Print media is heavily utilized by the retail music stores to draw attention to new and old labels and special promotions. This activity is heavily subsidized by the music label to promote their individual artist.

Each label is responsible for the recruitment, development and promotion of individual artists. The glut of records inhibits exposure at the retail level and over the airways. Some record companies have been compelled to establish marketing promotions where records are given away to promote awareness of certain acts. Because a greater investment of time, money and creativity is required to develop many of today's acts, label managers acknowledge that they are more likely than ever to cut short promotion in order to cut their losses quickly on albums that don't show early signs of returning the investment. This strongly limits the potential for success because some artists require longer and more diverse promotion.

One type of music sampling device is called PICS Previews. Although it permits some in store sampling, its use is severely limited. It primary format is based on the hardware configuration and is not easily modifiable. The device incorporates a television screen with a large keypad covered with miniature album covers, and these are locked into a laser disk player. A master disk which holds a fixed number of videoclips—usually about 80—is used as the source of music information. The consumer is permitted to view a video which represents a selection from the album. However, information from only those artists who have made a video and who are featured on the PICS can be accessed. The consumer cannot make his own selection. The selections are not necessarily those that are in the store inventory.

Another in-store device traded as Personics System provides the user with the ability to make customized tapes from selected music stored on the machines. This device is expensive to use and is time consuming. Exposure to artists is limited. The device is viewed by record production companies as cannibalistic. Record production companies have been reluctant to permit the new songs of their top artists to be presented on these devices.

Presently, the store clerk or cashier tends to utilize the in-store sound system to develop their individual musical tastes. Selection tends to be progressive, with little consumer appeal.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to a user-interactive multimedia based point-of-preview system. In particular, there is provided interactive digital music sampling kiosks to the retail music industry. The listening booth of the 1950s has been reborn and through the application of software and hardware technology has been brought into the next century.

Through the kiosk station which acts as a computer age "listening booth", the consumer as a subscriber is put in contact with his purchases by having offered the ability to preview music before purchasing selections at record stores. The guesswork is taken out of music buying by offering more informed purchase decisions comparable with those available for other consumer products.

The kiosk station provides access to music products through sampling individual selections as discrete increments of information and allows the subscriber to make more educated purchases. The kiosk station will